RIVER FISH NETS

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Three types of nets are used in river fishing; the ta-an, tangkop and salok. The salok is a butterfly-like net, infrequently seen, used to catch shrimp that cling to the muddy banks of the river during the rainy season. The tangkop net is used for pangangkop to be described later. The ta-an is the net most widely used for Hipon. (See Plate XXXV.)

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[4]Identification was made with specimens preserved in a 70 per cent solution of alcohol through the cooperation of Dr. D. V. Villadolid, Director, I. Ronquillo and A. Sarenas, Bureau of Fisheries, Manila.

[5]The Anapan of Siaton is the Palangan of Tanjay. Palangan in Herre and Umali, op. cit., is said to be the "Slipmouth" (Family Leiognathidae) which is not the same fish identified as the Anapan or Palangan of Siaton.

[6]The Anapan specimen in the collection was a juvenile mullet. Differential characteristics of the different genera are not only difficult to see at such a stage but may overlap. Dr. Villadolid thinks possibly that the Anapan and Gisao may be the same fish.

[7]Gisao in Herre and Umali, op. cit., is called "Mullet Fingerling" (Family Mugilidae).

[8]Some Filipinos said the Halo-an is the "Mudfish" called Dalag (Tag.)

[9]Hipon are Family Gobiidae according to Herre and Umali, op. cit.

[10]Inid and Bulan-Bulan are also caught in the sea.

[11]Oga-oi is normally caught in river traps only during the rainy season.

[12]See Nos. 5 and 6.

[13]Pili, Lebongan and Bogsikan are usually found farther north than Caticugan "where the river is swifter and deeper."

[14]Bonog in Herre and Umali, op. cit., is "Goby" (Chonophorus melanocephalus or Glossogobius giurus.)

(i.e., the last quarter of the moon, often seen in the sky at noon), several days after the "dying moon" (himatayon) and two or three days after the full moon (subang). During the full moon, however, only the "fine type" are said to be caught. Examination of the types of Hipon caught during these runs did not bear out this folk-statement. Others said that in years when mushrooms are scarce Hipon are most plentiful. During a Hipon run several hundred people, from the poblacion and the barrios, can be seen catching the fish in the river; Caticugan is almost deserted during these runs.

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Ta-an Nets

Ta-an nets are placed in shallow water near the banks or on sand bars of the Siaton River. Usually low walls of stone and palm leaves are built to make a channel that leads the water into the net. The net, tied to stakes driven into the river bed, is usually four or five feet long and two or three feet wide. The net opening faces downstream since the Hipon swim upstream. Fish pass into the first section of the net, over the front flap that is weighted with stones or sticks. This flap is weighted so it is only partly submerged, not touching the net bottom, but tied by strings at a five or ten degree angle. (See Plate XXXV, Detail B.)[1] This makes it impossible for fish, once they swim over the flap and into the first section of the net, to escape. Eventually they swim from the first section through the two small openings (galao) into the second section of the net;

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[1] [this plate (p. 544) is missing -- Analyst]

(see Plate XXXV, Detail A)[1] the catch is scooped out of this section. 227

Ta-an nets have the advantage of not having to be watched constantly; they are set up by men. Ta-an catches are for family consumption. One group that netted Hipon with a tangkop near the Siaton River mouth caught two cavans in an afternoon. Large catches usually are made near the mouth or just off the mouth of the river, with bigger nets; Hipon sell in the marketplace for about five dollars per five-gallon can. The owner of a big net receives one-half of the catch, and his assistants divide the remainder equally. Young girls or women vendors from Caticugan and other barrios go to the mouth of the rivers during Hipon runs to sell or barter boiled bananas and other foods. 226 [435] [265]

The Asag and Balantak River Fish Traps

Two common types of fish traps used in Siaton River are the balantak and the larger asag. Small bobo fish traps may be placed in the river but this type of trap usually is put in the sea. The largest asag seen, at Sitio Daliw (north of Casala-an), was 12 feet long. (See Plate XXXVI.)[2] This asag, owned by one family, had stone retaining walls three to four feet high, several feet thick, and about 25 feet long. The walls ordinarily last until rainy season when they are washed away by the flooded river. Fish smaller than four or five inches could have passed 227

2 [See p. 546, Cat. 227 -- Analyst]

1 [this plate (p. 544) is missing -- Analyst]

20: Hart E-5 (1951) 1954 OA1 Philippines
Central Bisayan OA14

p. 546

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PLATE XXXVI

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through the interstices of this trap. Besides large shrimp and fish, this trap had caught a few water snakes and once a small wild pig. The trap had stood in the same location for 2 years, even through the height of rainy seasons. Few traps are left in the river during this season, lest they be lost.

To make an asag a thick bamboo is split into many thin strips almost to the end of the pole. The tips of the strips are spread apart to make the mouth and then are tied in place with sig-id vine or rattan.

BALANTAK

The balantak, shaped like a Coca-Cola bottle, is made of strips of thin bamboo woven together with rattan. (See Plate ~~XXXVII~~, Detail A.)[1] The narrow end is stuffed with abaca fiber or coconut matting so that small shrimp and fish cannot escape. The balantak is used in catching fish by the gamala process to be described shortly. At Barrio Casala-an, where the river is fished more extensively than farther south, a retaining wall about 50 feet long had been built to separate one small pool from the main river; this was a cooperative project of twenty people who divided the catch equally. A large balantak had been inserted in a small opening in this wall, through which the river water ran slowly into the pool. The many small fish in the pool tried to escape through the mouth of the trap.

1 [See p. 548, cat. 227-- Analyst]

20: Hart E-5 (1951) 1954 OA1 Philippines
Central Bisayan OA14

BALANTAK FISH TRAP (bamboo)
Scale 1/6 : 1"

Plate XXXVII

P. 548

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The Fish Guns

"Fish guns" are another technique for catching fish in river and sea. The smaller variety is known as pana sa isda ("fish bow and arrow") or baslay (said to be the Ilonggo term); a larger type is called posil-posil sa isda. English-speaking Filipinos, however, refer to both varieties as "fish guns." The "fish gun" is found in most parts of the Philippines; I have seen them from the upper Chico River (Luzon) to northern Mindanao.

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The "fish gun" is probably a 20th century innovation in the Philippines--an adaptation of the bow and arrow and the sling-shot. Once the people of Catiougan used bows and arrows to shoot fish in the river; in fact, informants say this was their only use. The bow was bamboo, the string twisted abaca twine, and the arrows bamboo tipped with iron points made from discarded umbrella ribs. "With the Spaniards in the old days there was plenty of the umbrella ribs." With the advent of the automobile during the American period came the inner tube. Rubber used to make the "guns" is obtained by bartering food for punctured inner tubes; rubber strips are sold by the Chinese in Siaton poblacion.

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The "fish gun" is usually made of bamboo; sometimes a hole is drilled through the center of a soft piece of wood. (See Plate XXXVIII.)[1] The umbrella rib arrow (agoha) is sharpened at the tip; the other end is notched for insertion of the drawstring. The Posil-posil sa isda normally have a trigger. (See Plate XXXIX.)[2] There are many different types of triggers.

1[See p. 559, cat. 227 or 116 -- Analyst]
2[See p. 560, cat. 227 or 111 -- Analyst]

20: Hart E-5 (1951) 1954 OA1 Philippines
Central Bisayan OA14

PANA SA ISDA or BASLAY
(Scale: 1/4" = 1")

PLATE XXXVIII

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20: Hart E-5 (1951) 1954 OA1 Philippines
Central Bisayan OA14
P 560

PLATE XXXIX

POSIL-POSIL ga ISDA

(Scale: 1" = 1')

DETAIL - A.
(Scale: 1/4" = 1')

DETAIL - B
(Scale: 1/4" = 1")

DETAIL - C
(Scale: 1/4" = 1")

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(See Plate XL. Figure B was seen in Pangasinan province, Luzon.)[1] Pana sa isda are usually from five to ten inches long, the arrows from fifteen to twenty inches; posil-posil sa isda may be from one and one-half to five feet in length whereas the arrows are from twenty to forty inches long. I shot a posil-posil sa isda that hurled a 40-inch arrow 20 feet, penetrating half way through a medium-sized banana trunk. Often a posil-posil sa isda may have as many as four to six rubber bands to increase the arrow's velocity; some will shoot an arrow 150 feet, although after the first twenty or thirty feet the flight is not straight. 227

The posil-posil sa isda is used more for "shooting" larger fish in the sea; the pana-sa isda is for river fishing. Most boys, as young as seven or eight years, have a pana sa isda that they use with considerable skill. Women never and young girls rarely "shoot" fish, either in the river or the sea. Young boys go to the river wearing home-made goggles and stand for hours in the water, now and then ducking their heads beneath the surface to look for small fish. The goggles are made of wood with pieces of broken glass for lenses. The glass is sometimes affixed to the handcarved wooden frames with the wax of wild honeycomb. Usually a boy wears a bamboo container at his waist for catch. 226 462

Morning or afternoon, one might see two or three small boys, standing in the river, with their heads popping in and out of the water. Sometimes they stayed

1 [See p. 562, cat. 227 -- Analyst]

20: Hart E-5 (195.) 1954 OA1 Philippines
Central Bisayas OA14

Plate II

p 562

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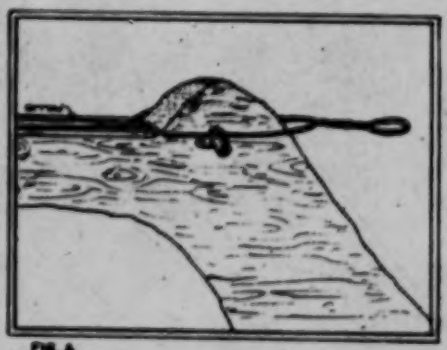

FIG. A

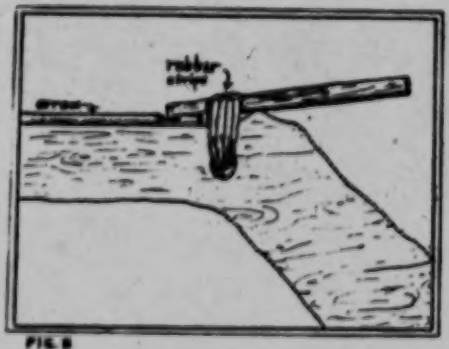

FIG. B

FISH GUN TRIGGER TYPES

20: Hart E-5 (195:) 1954 OA1 Philippines
Central Bisayan OA14

p.565

Plate XII

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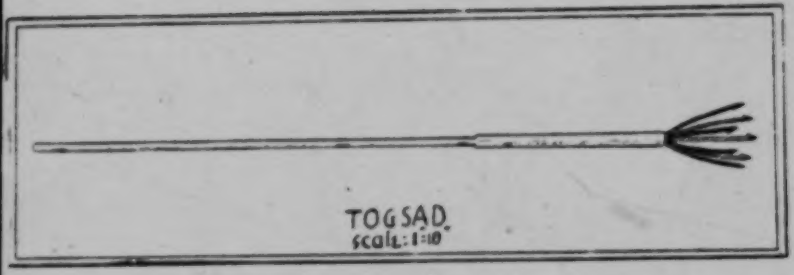
KAO-IT
scale: 1:4



TOGSAD
scale: 1:10

never sold there. The scarcity of fish may be somewhat atypical--although most residents claimed it was not--since the bonsod catches were small this year and the fish corrals destroyed earlier than usual. When the day's fish supply arrived in the marketplace, it was quickly sold; some days there were no fresh fish for sale. Since fish brings a higher price in Dumaguete even small amounts are taken to the city, draining Siaton of much of its fresh fish. For example, one afternoon a fish corral made a catch of more than thirty boxes of sardine. The owner sold a few boxes in Siaton, more from a sense of duty than for profit, at eleven dollars a box; the rest were sent to Dumaguete where they sold for thirteen dollars a box. As a result, whenever news comes to the poblacion that a large catch has been made, either in the bonsod or by netting, the people flock to the seashore to buy fish for their personal use or to sell in the local market.

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FISH NETS IN SIATON

Since the last war abaca nets have replaced the cotton twine nets once widely used in Siaton; twine nets are very expensive owing to inflation. In the past many large twine nets used were made in Japan whereas today most of them are said to be imported from the United States. Nets made of cotton twine are called pokot or sigin; those made of abaca are called sahid or sinsoro.

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[439]

One Malabuhan fisherman had an abaca net 1,290 feet long and 18 feet wide. 227

Nets are used in netting bonsod catches. The net is taken to the fish corral in a bokaran (a boat that does not have an outrigger); netted fish are scooped from the large net with a small hand net (sibot). Large nets are also used to catch schools of fish that come near the beach. These nets are taken to the sea in a panahiran, a boat that has an outrigger, and cast into the sea. The two ends of the net are pulled shoreward by people standing on the beach. Sometimes nets will be a combination of twine and abaca, the latter material is used "to make [the net] easier to pull." Large abaca "patches" are also often found in twine nets to catch small fish like the Tugnos and Tolakhang (anchovies). Abaca nets may have a paboto (pocket) of finer abaca weave for catching fingerlings. These are beach seine nets (pukot). 228 227

One fisherman had built a platform between two coconut trees about 30 feet above the beach; here a man stayed to watch for schools of fish. When a school was sighted he called the men by blowing a shell horn (budyong)--the same shell once used to warn the people of Moro raids. Often men in boats search the offshore waters for schools of fish. Sometimes a net is put into the sea for a "blind" catch, i.e., no school of fish is sighted. When a school is seen the panahiran is launched and the school surrounded. If the school is large the news quickly reaches the poblacion. People rush to the beach to help 228

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pull the net. When the fish are emptied from the net those who helped receive small shares of the catch. Vendors come with guhang and other foods to sell to the crowd or barter for fish; the people often eat their fish at the beach. The whole affair becomes an impromptu picnic with eating, drinking and swimming.

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A few women in Siaton poblacion weave abaca for fish netting. However, most abaca material used to make nets is woven in Dauin and Bacong municipalities; more abaca is grown here and the women have a reputation for weaving. I saw far more looms in Dauin and Bacong poblaciones than in Siaton. The material is sold in rolls forty to fifty feet long and thirty-five to forty inches wide; one roll is often sold to Siaton fishermen for two or three dollars.[63]

Lava Net

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The lava is a circular twine net with many small lead sinkers attached to the outer edge.[64] Only one man in Barrio Caticugan owned a lava with a diameter of 11 feet. The lava, however, is rarely used in Siaton; only two were seen in the fishing sitio of Malabuhan. It is

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[63] One woman in Siaton poblacion sold three rolls of abaca (39 inches in width) for $9 to a Chinese store. The fiber cost $3. She estimated that it took her 60 hours to weave the three rolls so she made about 10 cents an hour. Another woman said she could weave 48 feet of abaca daily if the loom were loaded.

[64] De la Victoria, op. cit., p. 46, describes the identical net used in Cebu and also called lava. Lava is a general term for cast net: dala (Tag.), tabukol (Ilk.); sabukol (Pang.). Umali, Guide to the Classification of Fishing Gear in the Philippines, p. 119.

used for fishing in shallow waters, frequently around the mouths of the Siaton and Canaway Rivers; the catch is usually small Hinok, Subad-subad, Tigue (Tigi), Dalangan Balawis, Aso-os, and Ciseo. 228

Kayakag Net

The kayakag is a twine gill net used to catch Bangsi and Balo (flying fish and garfish). Umali states kayakag-pamalo is a "gill net for taking balo (garfish) in Negros Oriental Province."[65] The top of the net has floats made from the dried fruit of the bito-on tree to keep the net near the surface. There are two types of kayakag nets: one is about 1,000 feet long and 12 feet wide and used on moonlit nights. During moonless nights a shorter net is employed, about 600 feet long and only 6 feet wide. Some very short kayakags, 4 feet wide and 25 feet long, were seen in Barrio Cabangahan. 228 227

Tapsay Net

The tapsay, an abaca net (sometimes twine), is used only in shallow water. Two men each hold the top corners while two helpers step on the lower corners to submerge this part. Several assistants with pieces of coconut husk tied to strings pull (scarelines) these devices rapidly through the water, simulating a large fish's wake. This frightens smaller fish into the partially submerged net, that is jerked to the surface when the fish are in the center. This net is infrequently seen in Siaton; no 228 [227]

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[65] Umali, op. cit., p. 111.

tapsays were used in Malabuhan. One informant said the tapsay was quite popular in Bais municipality. 228

Net Preservatives

Tabigi tree bark (Xylocarpus granatum Koenig) and tanbark are used as net preservatives.[66] One Malabuhan fisherman said he purchased a sack of tabigi bark for seventy-five cents from a Tanjay resident. The bark is boiled down with water that is poured into a boat; the nets soaked in the mixture--and sometimes the fishermen's pants are added! This process is done twice a week, and gives the nets a rich brown color. Boiled tanbark and lime water also are used to preserve the nets. Normally only twine, not abaca nets, are soaked in these preservatives "for twine nets are very expensive." On the whole, these native net preservatives are not widely used by Siaton fishermen, probably because so few have twine nets. 227 [824]

Basnig or Lift Netter

The basnig is a bamboo structure that floats at the mouth of a river and can be moved upstream or downstream. Four tall poles with pulleys are used to lower a large square net into the water. When a school of fish passes over the submerged net it is pulled upward by ropes. In 1951 there was one basnig, owned by an Ilongo from Iloilo City at the mouth of the Canaway River.[67]

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[66] Brown, op. cit., III, p. 66.

[67] Villadolid, op. cit., p. 22. The basnig (as pictured by Umali, page 48) is called salambaw. His use of basnig (pp. 103-4) describes a different net. Umali, op. cit., p. 148.

Twine nets are repaired with a bamboo shuttle-like device called sikhohan; sikhohan are made in several different sizes. (See Plate L.)[1] In repairing twine nets all loose or "false" threads are cut; "false" threads are those that if unravelled sufficiently are not fixed to an untorn part of the net. New twine is woven into the holes with the sikhohan. Net mending is a man's job, "especially if we cannot go to the sea"; women rarely mend nets.

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[426]

Bobo Fish Traps

The bobo, a bamboo fish trap, is widely used in Siaton for obtaining pelagic fish; the trap is distributed throughout the Philippines. Victoria has written of the bobo of Cebu. He states that its fishermen bait the bobo;[68] however, Siaton bobos are not baited. Kangleon reported that Leyte fishermen put bobos in water as deep as 180 feet where they may stay for 3 months.

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[171]
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[68] De la Victoria, op. cit., p. 46. Umali calls the bobo "a fish pot" and writes that recently they have been made of chicken wire. Umali, op. cit., p. 106.

[1] [this plate is missing -- Analyst]